



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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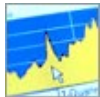
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We have had some important CURFs released in the last few months, with the National Health Survey CURFs released in September and October and the Business Longitudinal Database CURF released in October. The National Health Survey CURFs are some of the most heavily used CURFs, and have had strong interest from users so far. Please see the article below for further information about these CURFs as well as other upcoming CURFs.

The ABS has also been looking at ways to improve access to microdata and has set up a project to look at future needs and possible future services. Further details are below, and we'll also keep you posted in future Newsletters.

We also have a new URL short cut you can use when accessing the microdata pages in the ABS website. You can still navigate to the Microdata home page via the Services link from the ABS home page, but this additional option makes finding out about microdata easier: www.abs.gov.au/about/microdata

Finally, I would like to wish all our CURF users, Contact Officers and Responsible Officers a safe and happy holiday season.

Michelle Gifford
Acting Director, ABS Microdata Access Strategies

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New CURF releases

This part of the Newsletter provides information on recent and forthcoming CURF releases. Clients may also keep up to date with CURF releases by subscribing to our Email Notification Service or the ABS RSS Feed.

National Health Survey, Basic and Expanded CURF, Australia, 2007-08. *Released: 14 September 2009 and 9 October 2009*

The 2007-08 National Health Survey CURF contains data on persons and households living in private dwellings in all states and territories, excluding very remote areas. Information was collected about the health status of the population, health-related aspects of lifestyle and other health risk factors, and the use of health services and other actions people had recently taken for their health. In addition to demographic characteristics (age, sex, marital status, education, labour force, language, country of birth, income),

personal information includes data on the prevalence of long-term conditions, medication use, private health insurance, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, physical activity, diet and both self-reported and measured Body Mass Index. Data previously not collected in the NHS on disability, self-management of health, bodily pain experienced, personal stressors, waist and hip measurements, and physical activity at work and home are also included. Risk factor information was also collected from a more extensive age group. Household information relating to geography (on a broad level), household composition, housing, SEIFA and income data are also included.

Microdata: Business Longitudinal Database, Expanded CURF, Australia, 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07. Released: 30 October 2009

The aim of Business Longitudinal Database (BLD) is to facilitate micro level analysis for a panel (cohort) of small and medium businesses over time, and it includes both characteristics and financial data. A new wave of businesses is added each year and each wave is surveyed for five years. This CURF provides information for the first two panels included in the BLD. Panel One contains three reference periods of data (2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07) and Panel Two contains two reference period of data (2005-06 and 2006-07).

The Business Longitudinal Database Expanded CURF is available through the RADL.

Microdata: National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2007 - Re-Issue Basic and Expanded CURFs. Released: 13 November 2009

The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing was re-issued as an error was identified in the original CURF. Further information about the error was emailed to all current users of these CURFs.

Microdata: Labour Force Survey and Forms of Employment Survey, Basic and Expanded CURF, Australia, November 2008. Indicative release: January 2010

This Basic and Expanded CURF will provide information from both the monthly Labour Force Survey and the related Forms of Employment supplementary survey.

Detailed labour force and demographic characteristics for the civilian population aged 15 years and over will be included. In addition, data will be provided on independent contractors, other business operators and employees. Information will also be provided on people who had found their job through a labour hire firm or employment agency.

Microdata: Multipurpose Household Survey, Expanded CURF, Australia, 2008/09. Indicative release: February 2010

This CURF will provide statistics on four topics: Household Use of Information Technology, Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Retirement and Retirement Intentions, and Crime Victimization.

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New directions for microdata access

Access to microdata assists and encourages informed decision making through enabling wider use of ABS data for social and economic research and analysis. The ABS has been making microdata available, under certain conditions, for statistical purposes in the form of Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) since 1985. The ABS has a well-established program for producing and providing access to CURFs and continues to develop strategies to improve researcher access to, and use of, unit record data for such purposes. The ABS currently releases three types of microdata: Basic CURFs, Expanded CURFs and Specialist CURFs via three modes of access: CD-ROMs, the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL) and the on-site ABS Data Laboratory (ABSDL).

Today there exists high user demand for the ABS to provide access to more detailed unit record data in a more flexible way, across a wider array of datasets (such as business data and longitudinal linked datasets). An inability to meet these demands will increasingly become a disadvantage to ABS core business, the relevance of the ABS and ultimately to the coherence of the NSS. This, along with a number of other drivers

for change including the growing risk of identification, has led the ABS to propose a new strategy for accessing ABS microdata into the future.

The proposed future strategy is to:

1. continue to produce and release Basic CURFs for use in the user's environment;
2. progressively replace RADL with a remote execution environment for microdata (REEM); and
3. to increase the use of the ABSDL for complex analysis of microdata, including providing access to longitudinal and linked datasets.

The key components of the REEM are the development of a Survey Table Builder (similar to the Census TableBuilder) and an Analysis Service (for statistical analysis). It is proposed that these services will access de-identified detailed microdata, with confidentiality routines built into the outputs generated to ensure that they are confidentialised in line with ABS legislative requirements and can be released as public use outputs (that is, they can be published and shared with others without restrictions).

REEM will use internationally recognised standards for the exchange of data and metadata including the use of the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) and Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) and machine to machine interfaces.

The first stage of REEM, development of a Survey Table Builder for Household collections, has commenced with a staged development planned to occur over the next few years. Over time it is planned to increase the number and variety of datasets accessible via the survey table builder. In parallel, research has commenced into exploring future directions for the Analysis Service. Through December 2009 the ABS will be undertaking a re-assessment of user requirements and consulting with other producers of microdata in Australia.

If you would like any further information on the proposed developments, or would like to be consulted during the assessment phase please contact Michelle Gifford on (02) 6252 7499 or michelle.gifford@abs.gov.au.

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Short cuts.

Short cuts is a regular feature highlighting tips and reminders for CURF users and Contact Officers with the hope of saving you time and leaving you more time to dream.

Q1. Do I need to send my Personal Deed of Undertaking to the ABS?

Answer: Yes! Please **fax** the signed, printed copy of your Personal Deed of Undertaking to the Microdata Access Strategies Section on 02 6252 8132, before you can be approved to access CURFs. A copy of your Personal Deed should also be sent to your Contact Officer.

Q2. How do I apply for access to CURF data?

Answer: Go into the MiCRO page on the ABS website.

- Register to MiCRO
- Apply to join your organisation (the Contact Officer from your organisation needs to endorse your application for membership)
- Apply for the CURF(s) you wish to access (the Contact Officer again needs to endorse your CURF applications)
- ABS will then assess your CURF applications

Joining an organisation does not itself constitute CURF access. Regardless of the holdings under your organisation, each individual needs to submit an undertaking through MiCRO and apply for each CURF. Once approved to access specific CURFs you will be notified by the ABS.

Q3. Why can't I use bootstrap commands in RADL?

Answer: To use bootstrap commands appropriately a user needs to be able to identify the primary selection units. These are not available for CURFs, due to confidentiality restrictions, so users need to use replicate weights instead. Further information about how to do this is available in the FAQ How do I use Replicate Weights in STATA?

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ABS Christmas shutdown - no manual clearance in RADL

The ABS will be closed for the period 25 December to 4 January 2010. Clients will continue to receive RADL automatic output clearance but no manual clearance service will be available.

If the lack of availability for manual clearance will cause serious difficulties during this period please do not hesitate to contact the RADL Administrator at <radl@abs.gov.au>

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